

Food Deserts, Libraries and Urban Communities

What is the Connection?

Purpose

Public libraries serve patrons who mainly live within food desert areas. Libraries are now redefining their services by examining how they can better meet their users' needs. One is educating patrons on how to obtain and sustain healthy food choices. Another, is by eradicating food deserts within their communities.

This poster shows how the Cleveland Public Library (CPL) addressed food security issues in Cleveland, Ohio through collaboration with local organizations such as the The Ohio State University Extension (OSU Extension) in Cuyahoga County and Burten, Bell, Carr Development, Inc. (BBC).

OSU Extension has expertise related to quality food growth and production. CPL has expertise in working with the wide range of needs of the communities in which it serves. BBC, a Cleveland nonprofit, has expertise in community development. Collaboration between these three organizations resulted in a quality program targeting a food desert.

Impact

This collaboration made great strides in the Kinsman neighborhood of Cleveland Ohio. For decades, businesses had refused to consider opening shops and stores in the community because of the ill-perceived notion that their businesses would not thrive in a low-income area. The Kinsman neighborhood at the time had no access to healthy, high-quality foods.

The OSU Extension through their Summer Sprout program, played a major role in supporting this effort. During the six-week course, CPL librarians, community advocates, and homeowners were trained. Instructors from local area farmers shared information on soil testing, land tilling, plant rotation, soil nutrients, composting, pest control remedies, and other gardening trends for a successful community garden. The program provided all the needed resources to begin and maintain a successful community garden, for beginners, to the more seasoned gardeners.

OSU Extension and BBC joined together to begin the Kinsman Farm, a 6-acre urban agriculture incubator site located in the neighborhood. This incubator farm is a site dedicated to encouraging new farmers to start their own farm business under a cooperative format. Produce from these farms were sold on BBC's Bridgeport Mobile Market to provide access to affordable produce to residents of low income communities.

Ohio State Colleges/Units Involved

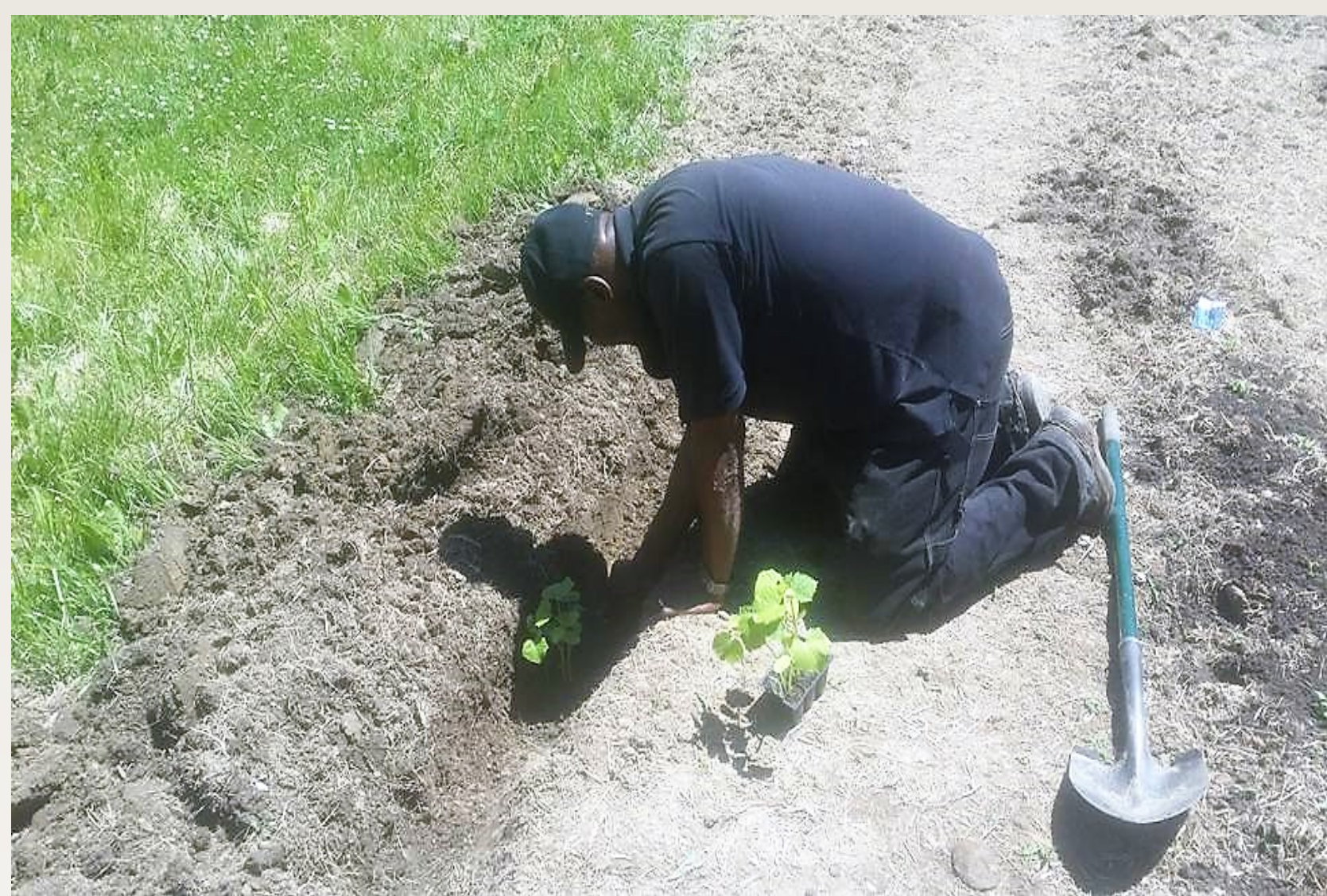
University Libraries

Community Partners Involved

Burten, Bell, Carr, Development, Inc.

How you can get involved

- Identify a food desert area by noticing no whole food grocery store or farmers market within a 1 mile radius of the community. Reach out to local food movements, such as a farmers market or mobile market.
- Contact your local land bank office for available plots in food desert communities.
- Check with City officials or administrators for approval of a garden project at a public library branch or school yard.
- Contact Ohio State University Extension office to find out about community and market garden programs.
- Attend a gardening program and obtain certification from Ohio State University Extension.
- Recruit community volunteers to assist with starting a community garden.



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

To Get Involved Contact

Tracey Overbey
Assistant Professor/
Sociology Librarian
overbey.13@osu.edu

or
Sherita Mullins
Director of Social Enterprises
smullins@bbcdevelopment.org